3: Reay E-4, 5 (1951) 1953 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

child's teeth tickled her in their tentative exploring. All these mothers laughed at the infants, with comments signifying, " He is not content to drink my milk ; he wants to eat me, too."

When the baby learns to walk, even if he is still unsteady on his feet, he ceases to be *meni orosati* and is known as *meni isapa* until he is about eight or nine years old. He stays at home with his older siblings while his mother goes to the garden, but she does not stay there all day now. She leaves the village quite early in the morning and returns to prepare a midday meal. As soon as the child is able to walk with his mother without impeding her progress, he goes to the garden with her. As he grows older, he plays with the other children in the gardens and may help his mother a little. Children of two or three years eat solid foods, mainly taro, but they still suckle. If they hang around their mother, except to approach the breast, she scolds them and makes them go away. Sometimes, if she is busy or does not want to sit down, she refuses them the breast. They go to their father, who spends much of his time sitting on the ground talking with the other men. The father takes the child between his legs, delouses his head affectionately, and holds him in his arms. It is always to the father that the child, especially the male child, runs for comfort.

The *meni isapa*, particularly at the age of two or three years, are the butt of jokes from the grown men, who frighten them by making strange noises and lungeing threateningly in their direction then laughing loudly as they watch the children cry, register bewilderment and run to their fathers. When their initial terror is overcome, the children learn to laugh at their own fright. This happens continually, until the child learns not to be afraid, imitates the men's frightening noises and grins back at them cheekily. All this is accepted by the women, who make no attempt to shield their children from experiencing such frights. If the men are her kinfolk, or friends of her husband or brother, the mother will join in with their raucous laughter. If they are strangers, she will take no notice of the incident. This frightening of small boys (*meni isapa*) is deliberate. Sometimes little girls are frightened incidentally at the same time, but no one takes much notice of this. Men do not go out of their way o frighten the little girls.

From about nine years till initiation at fifteen or sixteen, the child is known as *meni dombo*, or " big boy " (female, *meni kakara dombo*). I know very little about the *meni dombo*, either male or female. Married women among the Orokaiva are alarmed by the behaviour of the *meni kakara dombo*, who approach men casually to demand cigarettes and to talk freely about sexual matters in a joking way. This suggests that parents probably exercised more control in former times over the older children.

In Orokaiva childhood there are at least two conflict situations. At teething, the infant learns that he must not bite the mother's breast. Biting is accorded the immediate punishment of physical blows and unfeeling laughter at the child's expense. A three years old boy wanted to suckle and was kept waiting by his mother, who told him that she was busy and that he was getting too old to suckle anyway. He retaliated by biting her breast, but she hit him, scolded him and chased him away,

3: Reay E-4, 5 (1951) 1953 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

threatening that she would never again let him come to her breast. But as a rule the biting lesson seems to be learned easily, and mothers appear to have very little trouble with children biting them during the prolonged lactation.

The second conflict situation is the one induced by the adult men deliberately provoking fright in the small boy. The boy has to grow up to be fearless. Before the pacification of the Orokaiva and the surrounding tribes, this was part of the training of boys to be warriors. Ultimately, after being frightened by the men quite frequently over a couple of years or so, the boy is no longer afraid. But, in the meantime, his world is uncertain and conflicting. He learns to keep close to his father, so that he can rush to him if someone frightens him, and this association with his father continues long after he overcomes his fear of strange men making strange noises. It does not seem to occur to the child to run for comfort in these circumstances to his mother.

Initiation into Adulthood.

The initiatory rites are clearly divided into three major parts—the terror, the seclusion and the investiture. The initiation of a girl does not encompass all of these. At puberty she is secluded for a time, and then goes through a little purificatory ritual before ceremonially emerging from her seclusion. She does not have to endure the terror.

What I have termed "the terror" is what F. E. Williams refers to as the "initiation ceremony proper."[5] After being secluded for a short time, the candidates emerge and are shown the bullroarers and sacred flutes. Then the *embahi* (malevolent spirits) appear to them by moonlight and chase them around the village. The boys' parents cry out to the spirits to spare their children and not to devour them, but the *embahi* rush around crying out, "Kambo, kambo, kambo!" (Bite, bite, bite!). The boys are well aware that the *embahi* are a sham, and that they are really only fellow-villagers in disguise, but they are terrified none the less. Eventually, the *embahi* allow the boys' parents to overpower them and chase them from the village.

After they have undergone the "terror," the boys are secluded in the *oro* ("men's house"). ". . . During this period, they are instructed to be honest, obliging and diligent." They learn to play the flutes, and they plait armlets; otherwise they are inactive. Food is served to them by some old men. The boy's *nobo* (mother's brother), who has appeared as one of the *embahi* then returns to the village, divested of his frightening make-up, to lead the boy to the *oro* for his seclusion, and is responsible for feeding him during this period.

The final phase of the initiation is the boy's emergence from his seclusion. Like the girl on her emergence, he goes through a purificatory ritual. Then he is fitted with the *kokumbari* (feather headdresses), the wearing of which is a demonstration of his manhood. Again, it is the *nobo* (mother's brother) who presents him with the

[5] *Orokaiva Society*, p. 180, also pp. 181–192.